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NEWS RELEASE

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Ho'olawa Farms Benefits from Kaho'olawe Environmental Restoration

The Demand for Native Plants to Restore the Island Keeps Maui Company Busy

Honolulu, HI, November 1, 2005—Maui Nursery Ho'olawa Farms specializes in growing a wide range of native plant species, which has enabled the company to play an important role in the environmental restoration being carried out on Kaho'olawe by the Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission (KIRC). The KIRC environmental restoration program is planting large areas of the island with native species that include trees, shrubs, vines, grasses, and herbs. As re-vegetation continues, plans call for each acre planted to include up to 20 trees and 500 shrubs, along with grasses and vines.

The demand for native plant species on Kaho'olawe should provide plenty of work for Ho'olawa Farms for the foreseeable future. Anna Palomino, co-owner of Ho'olawa Farms, estimates that sales to the KIRC now represent between 20 and 25 percent of her company's business. Only about 150 acres have been planted out of the 820 acres currently scheduled for re-vegetation. Approximately 4,300 acres are targeted for eventual restoration. Ho'olawa Farms specializes in the restoration and propagation of plants that are indigenous or endemic to Hawai'i. Endemic and indigenous plants are both native to Hawai'i, which means that they occur here naturally. Plants that evolved and became unique to Hawai'i are referred to as endemic species. Indigenous

plants, also considered native, are found naturally in Hawai‘i as well as other parts of the world. The Beach Naupaka commonly seen along the coastlines is an example of an indigenous species.

The members of the KIRC restoration staff are eradicating alien species that have taken root and replacing them with native species. In particular, they are especially interested in native species that are as close as possible to the plants originally found on the island. KIRC restoration specialists believe they have a reasonably good picture of the types of plants that existed on Kaho‘olawe prior to Western contact, which disappeared from the island because of overgrazing by goats and cattle and the military degradation of the Kaho‘olawe.

To determine the types of plants most likely to have been part of the environment more than 200 years ago, when the most dramatic environmental impacts began to occur, KIRC’s environmental restoration specialists have referred to charcoal samples analyzed in archaeological studies, along with the findings of a survey of the island’s plants conducted in 1913. In addition, restoration specialists consider nearby locations with similar environments to those found on Kaho‘olawe, such as parts of Moloka‘i and the leeward slope of Maui.

Ho‘olawa Farms provides the KIRC Restoration Program with a variety of species, which are not only indigenous to Hawai‘i, but also endemic to these areas. According to KIRC’s Environmental Restoration Manager Paul Higashino, Ho‘olawa Farms provides primarily hardy drought resistant species that can flourish in the relatively arid climate of Kaho‘olawe. These include such varieties as aweoweo, ‘a‘ali‘i, koai‘a (a dry forest, dwarf form of koa), ‘ohia, olopua, and alahe‘e, as well as kamanomano. In addition to Ho‘olawa Farms, KIRC receives pili grass hay bales and native seed of ‘a‘ali‘i, aweoweo, and kawelu from the Plant Materials Center of the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service on Moloka‘i.

The re-vegetation using native plants is important for several reasons. The plants are part of the island’s original ecosystem, the restoration of which is part of the KIRC’s overall restoration mission. Additionally, the re-vegetation of Kaho‘olawe reduces soil erosion, which accelerates environmental damage to the island, as well as the ocean portion of the Reserve where the mud washed into the sea kills corals and other marine life.

“We are fortunate to have a resource like Ho‘olawa Farms supporting our restoration efforts,” said Higashino. “Whenever possible, we strive to use plants native to the area to which Kaho‘olawe belongs. These species are often genetically different from those of the same species found on other islands. The folks at Ho‘olawa Farms give us the capability to be as close as possible to the original plants that grew on the island.”

According to Palomino, “We are grateful to be part of the effort to restore the island of Kaho‘olawe. The work being done for the island makes our relationship with the KIRC Restoration Program much more than a business arrangement for us. The island is a special place and the commissioners and staff of the KIRC are working diligently to ensure that the essential nature of the island is re-established. The restoration of the native flora will do much to bring the island back to its previous state of existence.”

About Ho‘olawa Farms

From the time it was founded in 1989 by Anna Palomino and Don Bowker and currently has five employees. The mission of Ho‘olawa Farms has been to provide its diverse customer base plants native to Hawaii. In addition to the KIRC, its customers include landscapers, hotels and resorts, and government agencies. The company has grown from its original Maui-centric focus to an operation growing plants endemic to each of the major Hawaiian islands and even specific inter-island regions.

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